EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS
MINUTES
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Washington, DC
March 16, 2024

Present:

Officers:

Marcia Andrews, Chair-Elect, Palm Beach County School Board

Members:

Jerry Almendarez, Santa Ana Superintendent
Jill Baker, Long Beach Superintendent
Sabrina Bazzo, San Diego School Board
Sharon Contreras, North Carolina A & T State University, College of Education
Brandon Craig, Cincinnati School Board
Valerie Davis, Fresno School Board
Lewis Ferebee, District of Columbia Chancellor
Shavonna Holman, Omaha School Board
Rodney Jordan, Norfolk School Board
Roger León, Newark Superintendent
Alex Marrero, Denver Superintendent
Deborah Shanley, Brooklyn College School of Education
Mary Skipper, Boston Superintendent
Joyce Wilkerson, Philadelphia School Board
Stacey Woolley, Tulsa School Board

Absent:

Stephanie Elizalde, Dallas Superintendent
Kelly Gonez, Immediate Past Chair, Los Angeles School Board
Christina Martinez, San Antonio School Board
Sonja Santelises, Chair-elect, Baltimore CEO
Marcia Andrews, Chair of the Board of Directors, called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm. A quorum was established. Members then introduced themselves and gave a short update on events in their districts. Deb Shanley announced her retirement after 49 years.

Appointments and Nominations

The nominations committee met on March 7, and nominated the following individuals to fill vacancies on the Executive Committee—

**Officer Vacancy FY 2023-24**

1) Marcia Andrews (Palm Beach County School Board) to serve the unexpired term of Guadalupe Guerrero (Portland Superintendent) as Chair of the Board, ending June 30, 2024.

**Officers FY 2024-25**

1) Marcia Andrews (Palm Beach County School Board) to serve as Chair of the Board beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025.

2) Sonja Santelises to serve as Chair-Elect of the Board beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025.

3) Valerie Davis (Fresno School Board) to serve as Secretary/Treasurer of the Board beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025.

4) Kelly Gonez (Los Angeles School Board) to serve as Immediate Past Chair of the Board beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025.

**Renewal of Terms**

1) Jerry Almendarez (Santa Ana Superintendent) to serve a first three-year term from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2027.

**Vacancies**

1) Margo Bellamy (Anchorage School Board) to serve the unexpired term of Elyse Dashew (Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board), whose term was set to expire June 30, 2026.

2) Jenny Lam (San Francisco School Board) to serve the unexpired term of Diane Porter (Jefferson County School Board), whose term was set to expire June 30, 2026.
3) Martin Pollio (Jefferson County Superintendent) to serve the unexpired term of Susan Enfield (Washoe County Superintendent), whose term was set to expire June 30, 2024. He will serve a first three-year term beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2027.

4) Aleesia Johnson (Indianapolis Superintendent) to serve the unexpired term of Joe Gothard (St. Paul Superintendent), whose term was set to expire June 30, 2026.

5) Kyla Johnson-Trammel (Oakland Superintendent) to serve the unexpired term of Jesus Jara (Clark County Superintendent), whose term was set to expire June 30, 2026.

6) Darryl Willie (Duval County School Board) to serve the vacancy created by Valerie Davis (Fresno School Board), whose term was set to expire June 30, 2025.

A motion to approve the nominations passed without dissent by voice vote.

Minutes

Marcia Andrews presented the minutes of the January 19 & 20, 2024 meeting of the Executive Committee in Long Beach, CA.

A motion to approve the minutes passed without dissent by voice vote.

Membership

No report.

By-Laws

No report.

Audit

Ray Hart gave the report of the Audit Subcommittee. These are the same materials that were presented back in January, with only a few minor adjustments. Specifically, the Audit section includes the following materials—

- 2022-23 Independent Auditors Report for FY 2022-23. This is a completely clean report.
  - Statement of financial position
  - Statement of Activities
  - Statement of Functional Expenses
  - Statement of Cash Flows
  - Notes to Financial Statements
  - Supplemental information
  - Letter to the Executive Committee and Board of Directors
General Operations Budget Report for FY 2023-24 (for six months ending December 31, 2023)
  o Membership Dues Structure by Tiers (showing a 7.1% increase in 2023-24 over the previous year)
  o 2023-24 Membership dues status as of February 13, 2024. Ray Hart noted that Shelby County’s dues payment is being processed.
  o 2023-24 General operating budget by Function and Expense Line

Categorical Programs Budget Report FY 2023-24 for six months, ending December 31, 2023
  o Gates grants. The three-year grant on Urban District DOQ Activities and Curriculum Demand Aggregation was completed in October 2023. A new four-year grant Instructional Resources Adoption & Procurement Support was awarded effective November 1, 2023.
  o Categorical projects.

A copy of the Council’s Investments Policy and Guidelines

Asset Allocations, including an investment schedule and investment portfolio by Asset Class. All of our investment allocations are within their strategic targets. We continue to see a return on our investments, and as these investments mature, we pull them out and reinvest. This month, three quarters of a million matured, and were reinvested.

Proposed Budget for FY 2024-25. Ray Hart informed the group that since the last report in January, we have revised our grant expenditures/allocations to address our budget deficit. We now show a balanced budget. Also, Ray Hart informed the group of a new, four-year Gates Foundation grant which resulted in a $4.5 million increase in budget. This is unusual—a larger longer grant for a period of four years, which gives us greater flexibility. This will be recorded as full revenue, but in the coming years as we spend it down it will show as a deficit.
  o Membership Dues Structure by Tiers (showing a 3.1% increase this year from 2023-24 dues based on the CPI)
  o General Operating Budget by Function and Expense Line

A motion to approve the Audit report passed without dissent by voice vote.

Conferences and Meetings

Ray Hart reviewed the lineup of meetings in 2024. The Executive Committee will next meet on July 19 & 20, 2024 in St. Paul, MN. Joe Gothard is the new superintendent in Madison, WI but will be joining the Executive Committee in St. Paul.

There was a good meeting with the Dallas team this morning concerning the upcoming fall conference. We have made some adjustments to venues and are working on confirming speakers. Next fall the annual conference will be held in Philadelphia, and in 2026 we will be in Boston. We currently have a number of inquiries from districts interested in hosting Fall Conferences for 2027-2029.
The summer 2025 Executive Committee meeting will be held in Newark, NJ. We now need a new location for the winter 2025 meeting, January 24-25, given Jesus Jara’s exit from the Committee. Marcia Andrews invited the group to West Palm Beach.

A motion to hold the January 2025 meeting in West Palm Beach passed without dissent by voice vote.

**Strategic Plan**

Our strategic plan was developed in 2018 and lays out a roadmap for the organization through 2024. There are quarterly updates on the work done to reach each of these goals.

One of the main missions of the Council is to support and improve leadership and governance in our great city schools, and to this end Ray Hart gave an update on the Casserly Institute, which took place over the past several days on the front end of this conference. Three of the recent Casserly Institute graduates are now serving as superintendents.

Ray Hart then reminded the group that the strategic plan expires this year. It has been updated over the years to reflect changing needs/priorities but has not changed significantly. He proposed bringing it to a vote during the July meeting in St. Paul, and committee members agreed.

Members then underscored the importance of supporting school boards and superintendents, given the pace of turnover and transition in our current climate. Members discussed whether this needed to be further codified or articulated in the strategic plan or by-laws as a key priority for the organization.

Finally, members discussed the idea of creating an ongoing mechanism recognizing past members of the Executive Committee and maintaining communication/collaboration with Committee “alumni” moving forward.

**Personnel**

The Committee then went into closed session to discuss the Executive Director’s contract.

Respectfully submitted:

Ray Hart
Executive Director
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Marcia Andrews, Chair of the Board of Directors, called the meeting to order at 8:45 am ET. A quorum was established, and present members introduced themselves.

Minutes

Marcia Andrews presented the minutes of the October 2023 meeting of the Board of Directors meeting in San Diego, CA and the January 2024 meeting of the Executive Committee in Long Beach, CA.

A motion to approve the minutes passed without dissent by voice vote.

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A motion to approve the nominations passed without dissent by voice vote.

Audit

Ray Hart gave the report of the Audit Subcommittee. He began by acknowledging the work of the finance and administration team. He then informed the Board that, in response to a fraud attempt last January, we have spent the past year updating our accounts and information, accounting software, and moving to an electronic money transfer (ACH Transaction) process thereby reducing paper check payments.

The Audit section includes the following materials—

- 2022-23 Independent Auditors Report for FY 2022-23. This is a completely clean report, and our financial position is strong.
  - Statement of financial position
  - Statement of Activities
  - Statement of Functional Expenses
  - Statement of Cash Flows
  - Notes to Financial Statements
  - Supplemental information
  - Letter to the Executive Committee and Board of Directors
• General Operations Budget Report for FY 2023-24 (for six months ending December 31, 2023)
  o Membership Dues Structure by Tiers (showing a 7.1% increase in 2023-24 over the previous year)
  o 2023-24 Membership dues status as of February 13, 2024. Ray Hart noted that dues from Shelby County are being processed. A large portion of our revenue comes from dues, and this is intentional. Two districts currently have waived membership dues—Puerto Rico and New Orleans—but the Executive Committee has asked us to revisit this issue with New Orleans, so we will be reaching out to them.
  o 2023-24 General operating budget by Function and Expense Line
• Categorical Programs Budget Report FY 2023-24 for six months, ending December 31, 2023
  o Gates grants. The three-year grant on Urban District DOQ Activities and Curriculum Demand Aggregation was completed in October 2023. A new four-year grant Instructional Resources Adoption & Procurement Support was awarded effective November 1, 2023.
  o Categorical projects.
• A copy of the Council’s Investments Policy and Guidelines
• Asset Allocations, including an investment schedule and investment portfolio by Asset Class. All of our investment allocations are within their strategic targets. We continue to see a return on our investments, and as these investments mature, we pull them out and reinvest. This month, three quarters of a million matured, and were reinvested.
• Proposed Budget for FY 2024-25. Ray Hart informed the group that a balanced budget is projected with the help of a new four-year grant from the Gates Foundation.
  o Membership Dues Structure by Tiers (showing a 3.1% increase this year from 2023-24 dues, based on the Consumer Price Index)
  o General Operating Budget by Function and Expense Line

A motion to approve the Audit report passed without dissent by voice vote.

By-Laws

No report.

Membership

No report.

Strategic Planning

Our strategic plan was developed in 2018 and lays out a roadmap for the organization through 2024. We haven’t had to make any significant changes over the years, as we have been able to adjust the existing mission and strategies to reflect changing pandemic and
post-pandemic needs and priorities. For example, our work to strengthen leadership has expanded to include the launch of the Casserly Superintendents Institute. And our research, legislative advocacy, and communications efforts are ongoing.

There are quarterly updates on the work done to reach each of these goals, and Board members will find the latest update in the materials. The Executive Committee will be voting on extending the strategic plan at its upcoming July meeting in St. Paul.

This section of the Board materials also includes a copy of the recently released *Blueprint for Safer Schools and Communities*, a guide we put together as part of a joint task force with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP).

In addition, there is a guide to the Council’s member services/resources, but this was published a number of years ago. To continue to share and highlight new resources, we will start featuring a report or guide in our *Urban Educator* newsletter.

**Conferences and Meetings**

Ray Hart reviewed the lineup of meetings in 2024. There was a good meeting with the Dallas team yesterday concerning the upcoming fall conference. There is a call for presentations included in the materials. Next fall the annual conference will be held in Philadelphia, and in 2026 we will be in Boston. We are currently entertaining letters of interest in hosting Fall Conferences in 2027-2029, and we have had a number of inquiries.

**Communications**

The communications section of the committee materials includes a collection of the Council’s latest statements, press releases, and articles. In particular, Ray Hart called the group’s attention to a sample of articles on pandemic recovery, based on the release of the academic recovery scorecard. There are also sections on media coverage of the Council’s reviews, reports, and activities, articles on district leadership (and transitions), and articles on current issues in education where Council staff are quoted or cited.

There are also update reports on the organization’s social media presence over the past few months and the most recent issues of the *Urban Educator*. Ray Hart recognized the Communications team for having been awarded a National School Communication Award for this publication.

Ray Hart then highlighted a recently released crisis communications guide and reviewed a few key recommendations from this report. The group discussed the challenge of building (or rebuilding) trust with the community and providing transparency and clarity during a time of crisis.

Finally, the communications section of the materials provides information on the Council’s recent SXSW presentation and a flyer for the upcoming PRE meeting.
Legislation

Manish Naik gave the Board a brief overview of the legislative sessions and discussions scheduled over the next two days.

Research

The research materials begin with a department overview. Ray Hart thanked the research team, and pointed out that the Council’s recent NAEP longitudinal data report, Between the Lines, received an AERA Outstanding Publications Award. The overview and the research section of the Board book provides information on a number of recent presentations by the Council’s research and academic staff, and our work with other national organizations. We held a TUDA taskforce meeting earlier this week and worked with TUDA district communications teams, supporting them with how to communicate results.

Ray Hart noted the section in the overview on Information Technology. We are investing in new ways of communicating and interacting with our member district staff. Our new online communities enables smoother dialogue, easier sharing of documents, and a more efficient process for responding to inquiries and requests for assistance.

Ray Hart then called the group’s attention to an update on the work of the assessment consortia. We are working with the various assessment publishers—iReady, NWEA, and Star Renaissance—to collect data across districts. We have also asked your research departments for district-specific data. This gives us a way of looking at achievement without having to rely on NAEP or state data.

At the Achievement and Professional Development Task Force meeting on Saturday, we discussed pandemic recovery data. Our recovery is leading the nation. Ray Hart thanked all present members for their tremendous work on behalf of students, and then reviewed some key findings in the report.

The research materials also include:

- A report on enrollment trends
  - Ray Hart noted that the initial declines at the beginning of the pandemic were the steepest (both with and without pre-K), but the pace has slowed down. This is good news, as it shows that declines have begun to wane. There are also some gains in some districts and some grades.
  - In addition, this report includes attendance KPIs.
- A revised academic key performance indicators (KPI) report
- An ESSER financial survey
Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development

Deborah Shanley started the report of the Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development. She started by introducing her task force co-chairs, and then asked Rodney Jordan to add to the report. The overview document in the Board materials offers a valuable guide to the resources, tools, and support provided by the Council to assist districts in curriculum and instruction. The overview also provides an update on academic department projects and activities.

The task force meeting yesterday included a review of the task force goals, which are being revised, as well as several presentations from both Council and district staff on pandemic recovery and chronic absenteeism.

Deb Shanley then called the group’s attention to a flyer on the upcoming Curriculum, Research, and Instructional Leaders Conference in Chicago in July. She also recognized the monthly role alike conference calls that the academic team hosts. These calls often feature presentations from districts on curricular design, development, and implementation.

Task Force on English Language Learners and Bilingual Education

Jerry Almendarez gave the report of the Task Force on English Language Learners and Bilingual Education. He began by reviewing the agenda and presentations from yesterday’s task force meeting. The ELL section of the materials starts with an overview of the activities of the ELL department, and the task force meeting touched on much of this work. This includes resources for supporting newcomer students and their families, information on writing courses, 3Ls, and information on the upcoming BIRE meeting in May, which will feature two days of school visits in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys

Ray Hart gave the report of the Task Force on Black and Latino Young Men and Boys. The task force meeting yesterday touched on additional ways the Council can support the work districts are doing on the ground. This includes development of the data provided in the materials, as well as the dashboard and KPIs. The task force meeting also featured a presentation from DCPS on their work to support Black and Latino male students.

Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls

Shavonna Holman gave the report of the Task Force on Black and Latina Young Women and Girls. She reviewed the agenda and presentations from yesterday’s task force meeting, including a presentation from Working on Womanhood (WOW), followed by a Q&A session.

We have been thinking of ways to restructure and revitalize the work of the task force to be of more use to districts in this area. One idea is to host a symposium. We are also
considering developing a subcommittee on data collection – including health and mental health data.

**Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance**

Joyce Wilkerson gave the report on the Task Force on Leadership, Governance, Management, and Finance. She applauded the Council for their ongoing support and hands-on work with leaders and school boards through various professional development opportunities, learning cohorts, individual coaching, and networking opportunities. She then reviewed the agenda and presentations from the task force meeting. Members present at the meeting discussed the unprecedented level of turnover among district leaders, making the work of Council staff more critical than ever. She encouraged members to reach out for assistance as needs arise.

Ray Hart then called group’s attention to a recent budget presentation from LAUSD Superintendent Alberto Carvalho. He is the only sitting superintendent that was a district leader during the past recession, so it is valuable to hear how Miami navigated that financial crisis. Miami became one of the fastest improving districts after that time, so we wanted to highlight the approaches and strategies they employed.

Ray Hart then updated the Board on the work of the Casserly Institute and reviewed the materials included in the Leadership, Governance, and Management Services section of the materials.

**Wrap up**

Ray Hart thanked all member district staff who have volunteered to support SSTs and document creation by CGCS teams.

Marcia Andrews then thanked the Council staff and the Board of Directors for being here today. She also informed the group that the Executive Committee has extended Executive Director Ray Hart’s contract for five years.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45am.

Respectfully submitted:

Ray Hart
Executive Director